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THE THEOLOGIAN

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## Joseph Agar Beet, D.D.

Beet was good theologian but was mistaken about immortality of the soul. He claimed the Bible does not mention immortality of the ~~soul~~ directly but one cant take Bible for its literal meaning, especially the Apocalypse.

Apocalypse actually can happen at any age & that is warning from God to all generations. Beet seemed uncertain on the immortality of the soul but Bible clearly says: Be careful of 2nd death, one can kill body but soul never can, as stated:

Matthew 10:28 says, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (second resurrection)."

The word "soul" in this context implies "the capacity to live." That is, another human being may be able to take away our life, but we still have the capacity to live again. God can always bring us back to life in the resurrection. So, though we naturally fear people who can cause our physical death, Jesus was giving us the true, eternal perspective. We should not fear man, but God.

Why? God has the authority to deny bringing us back to life—destroying the capacity to live ever again. "Hell" in this verse refers to the gehenna garbage heap fire burning in the valley outside of Jerusalem. It's symbolic of what the Bible calls "the lake of fire." If we die "the second death" in the lake of fire, there remains no hope of a resurrection (Revelation 21:8).

Joseph Agar Beet was an English Wesleyan who wrote in Methodist and Wesleyan tradition; born at Sheffield on September 27 1840, died on May 25 1924. He lived exactly 30555 days, **4365 WEEKS.**

He attended Wesley College, Sheffield (1851-56), and took up mining engineering, but afterward studied theology at the Wesleyan College, Richmond (1862-64). He was pastor 1864-85 and professor of systematic theology in Wesleyan College, Richmond, 1885-1905. He was also a member of the faculty of theology in the University of London 1901-05. He delivered the Fernley Lecture on The Credentials of the Gospels in 1889, and lectured in America in 1896. Though long recognized as one of the ablest theologians and exegetes of his denomination, his sympathy with the modern critical school of interpretation and particularly his views on eschatology have occasioned much criticism. In *The Last Things* (London, 1897; 2nd ed., 1905) he opposed the belief that the essential and endless permanence of the soul is taught in the Bible and denied that eternal punishment necessarily means endless torment, holding that the sinner may suffer a relative annihilation of his mental and moral faculties and sink into a dehumanized state. He reiterated these views in *The Immortality of the soul* (1901). Charges of heresy were brought against him at the Conference of 1902, but he was reelected to his professorship on condition that he refrain from expressing his opinions on immortality and future punishment. To regain liberty of speech in 1904 he gave notice that he would retire from his chair in twelve months. His other works are: *Commentary on Romans* (London, 1877); *Holiness as Understood by the Critics of the Bible* (1880); *Commentary on Corinthians* (1881); *Commentary on Galatians 27* (1883); *Commentary on Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (1890); *Through Christ to God* (1892); *The Firm Foundation of the Christian Faith* (1892); *The New Life in Christ* (1895); *Nature and Christ* (New York, 1896); *Key to Unlock the Bible* (1901); *Transfiguration of Jesus* (1905); and *Manual of Theology* (1906). Beet claims that eternal suffering in hell may not be true, however, one thing is certain, many of the souls in hell just wander somewhere throughout eternity, to say the least.

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human consciousness cannot be rejected as impossible and inconceivable. For no small part of human life is passed in unconsciousness. And, certainly, whether in its nature it be composite or uncompounded, He who called out of unconsciousness and non-existence both the human soul and the simplest forms of matter can, if He will, send them back to the non-existence from which He called them. To deny this, is to impose on the power of the Creator an impossible limit. Nor can it be objected that extinction would be, not punishment, but relief. It would be punishment tempered with mercy. As involving loss of the endless blessedness for which man was created, extinction is endless and infinite punishment. For its result will never cease. But, for those to whom, through their rejection of the salvation offered by Christ, existence has become an intolerable burden, extinction would be an act of mercy. So, in a contrary direction, the actual death of Christ upon the cross was deliverance from the curse and burden of man's sin: looked at from another point of view, it was a supreme act of self-sacrifice. That extinction is contrary to the creative purpose of God, is no difficulty. For that purpose was primarily one of mercy. This mercy was made contingent on man's obedience. Through his sin, the chief part of the purpose, viz. infinite and endless mercy, was thwarted: and we have no right to infer that, in spite of this failure, the subordinate part of the purpose, viz. endless existence, must necessarily be accomplished.

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That the theory before us is a less powerful deterrent from sin than is the theory of endless torment, can scarcely be urged as an objection. It would render equal support to every exaggerated picture of material fire. Our duty is, not to invent deterrents, but to use those revealed to us by God. Moreover, no deterrent is effective except so far as it commands the homage of the moral sense of man. Whatever teaching does not so commend itself is thereby weakened as a moral force. We gain nothing in any way by exaggerating the teaching of Holy Scripture.

This third theory does not lie open to the very serious objections which beset the theory of endless suffering. It does not involve the endless persistence of evil; nor, however terrible extinction may be to those created for endless blessedness, does it present to the moral sense the very great difficulties involved in the popular theory. And it permits us to look forward to a time when from the entire universe sin and sorrow will have alike vanished. The relief thus afforded and the prospect thus opened give to this theory a certain attractiveness.

These arguments in its favour seem to me, however, in the absence of any clear support in the Bible, and in view of the scantiness of our knowledge of the essential nature of the human soul, an altogether insufficient basis for confident belief or even plausible conjecture. For there may be another alternative altogether beyond our thought. The evidence before us is insufficient for reliable decision.